

THE FORTY CLUBS' TRIANGULAR TOURNAMENTS

by Peter S. Hargreaves

In a generation where international meetings within the auspices of the Masters' Games and the Golden Oldies have become established, the annual event of the original three veteran cricket clubs in Europe - the Forty Clubs - deserves a bit more limelight, not least through having been in operation since 1969, with the 20th of such tournaments having taken place in July, 1991. The prelude to this series, moreover, is an interesting story in itself.

In 1929 the eldest of the trio of the clubs, Still Going Strong C.C., was founded in Holland by A.J.H. Eyken, where its activities were confined at least for a good decade. In 1936 in England Henry Grierson and his friends then founded The Forty Club, which ranks among the largest in the world today in terms of membership.

In 1940 in Holland a man destined to do much for the game in his country entered the administration of S.G.S.C.C. - one R.G. Ingelse - who, later in 1951 was to take the club to England for the first time, and repeat the feat in both 1954 and 1956. It was not until 1961, in Rotterdam, where the two clubs met for the first time, however, where the notable keen rivalry between them already manifested itself, and in 1963 The Forty Club returned to Holland.

The last year mentioned marked the founding of the third of the clubs, Dansk XL C.C., whose first Annual General Meeting took place in March 1964. Later that year a side of Forty Club players led by A.L. Newbery met the new club at Hjørring, in North Jutland, and in the same summer S.G.S. met The Forty Club for the first time on English soil, at Sunbury-on-Thames.

In 1965 The Forty Club then met S.G.S. at Amsterdam, while the Dutch club made its first visit to Denmark, playing Dansk XL teams both at Funen and in Jutland - in the second of which encounters the perennial Aksel Morild made 84. In 1966 two notables were included in the Forty Club's side which visited Denmark, (Sir) Len Hutton and R.T. Simpson - the first being sensationally bowled by Tom Provis fourth ball for a duck and the second falling also to this bowler, in Copenhagen.

When S.G.S. met The Forty Club again at Sunbury-on-Thames in 1966 an historic, first Dutch victory in England resulted - mainly through an unbeaten 89 by Dr. G. Eikelboom - which made the B.B.C's news headlines. Later the same summer S.G.S. then hosted Dansk XL for the first time on Dutch matting at Apeldoorn.

In 1967 when The Forty Club visited Holland the West Indies leg-spinner, Dr C.B. Clarke, took the first of probably only two hat tricks recorded to date between the three clubs. In 1968 S.G.S. then faced a strong Forty Club side at Headingly, whereas the latter again visited Denmark, this time with the West Indies all-rounder, Denis Atkinson, in its ranks.

The series begins

So much for the lead-up to this series. By 1969 it had become obvious to all that far more enjoyment at less expense could be had if the three clubs could meet annually in a triangular tournament. Instead of in pairs, and with that year marking the 40th anniversary of Still Going Strong C.C., the oldest, it was natural for the first of such series to be played in Holland, at Wassenaar. On

this occasion two trophies were introduced - the Grierson-Ingelse and the Eikelboom cups - lest the rivalry were ever likely to wane. What happened to these trophies ultimately? In the middle of the 1970s one of them was still being displayed with a comment that anxiety existed as to whether it would pass through the customs without question - but that was about the last official reference to them. Something symbolic lurked within this.

The course of the tournaments has contained highlights in plenty, and it is of significance that on only about three occasions over the past 22 years the event has not been able to be carried through, for some reason or other. On the occasion of the 20th of them, at Slagelse in Denmark, upon a count being taken two men who were found to have been present the most at them were Jørgen Morild, of Denmark. and Daan Ingelse, of Holland, to whom the writer is greatly indebted for considerable help in the compiling of this record.

Just for fun

The most interesting aspect of all which arises here is the identity of the winner of the tournament in half of the cases - ludicrous as this might sound to historians and statisticians. Penetrative study has revealed that in many instances no set framework was laid down on this point - although, fairly obviously, upon one club's team beating the other two it would clearly automatically be the tournament winner. Prior to 1984 drawn matches occurred in plenty, and even upon limited overs becoming introduced in that year the event of rain intervening - especially on the third day - still frustrated the outcome. Now and then talk might have been raised of taking averages and other factors into account, but as if by consensus nothing was ever laid down about this - almost as if to leave the issues as interesting material for discussion at the tables of the traditional banquet on the final night each year. In short, an element of playing for the fun of it could be claimed to have been preserved here, for all the keenness generally apparent when any pair of the clubs have' clashed. On a single occasion one club, for certain reasons was unable to appear at short notice - leaving the other two to have to suffice with a slightly more friendly match than usual in what had to be declared as a 'no contest' year.

Where the strength has been concerned, The Forty Club, with so big a membership on which to draw, has generally tended to be the best equipped, especially in batting on turf in England. But there have been exceptions and surprises in plenty, as the accompanying table to this passage reveals. Both S.G.S. C.C. and Dansk XL C.C. have tended to be stronger in their own countries for obvious reasons, where the hurdles of finance and securing leave have been less difficult for their players to overcome.

Individual achievements

Prior to the introduction of limited overs in 1984 there was a greater chance of a single bowler dominating the scene, even if this seldom happened. The more prominent batsmen of The Forty Club tended to run up big scores, with R.T. Simpson and J.P. Fellows-Smith notoriously in the van, but where they failed the element of uncertainty frequently entered as if with a vengeance. S.G.S's

doyen batsman, Dr. G. Eikelboom may still head the run-makers of his club, but since he stopped playing the contributions to its batting have been more spread, with powerful hitting in the middle order often being a feature of the pattern. For Dansk XL the now legendary Aksel Morild - who has just passed on whilst these lines are being written - was a bulwark to the side's innings in his time, and his younger brother, Jørqen, has also been a most consistent performer during a long career.

A few performances stand out particularly vividly over the years in these matches - one being that of Yorkshire man, Bill Reader, for The Forty Club in 1973 in Copenhagen against Dansk XL, after Aksel Morild, at the age of 61, had given his side a feasible chance of a victory when carrying his bat right through the innings. Reader had taken 6 wickets and then followed by making 99 not out, to clinch the game when it might have gone either way.

Another outstanding all-round performance was produced by Carsten Morild - second cousin of Aksel and Jørqen - in 1980 Edinburgh, a year after he had done several fine things for his country in the first of the I.C.C. Trophy Competitions. He fairly ripped through The Forty Club, whose team was put out for a record low score despite having Fellows-Smith in its ranks, and then played a winning innings while nursing a very bad injury into the bargain.

For S.G.S. one has to mention the second hat trick achieved in matches between the clubs, which occurred at Amstelveen in 1990. Following a record high total, the host side opened with Theo Burki - known perhaps for living slightly in the shadow of his brother Coen as a bowler - and within few overs Dansk XL C.C. saw five wickets go down to this man.

The proper spirit

Although these games have been played hard for the most, importance has always been placed on their being played fairly - and woe betide the batsman getting a fine edge who dare so much as cast any challenging glance towards the umpire ... Now and then walkover victories have occurred, but the number of genuine, uncontrived cliff-hanger finishes has far outweighed these - which, without doubt, has been as the players for the most would prefer them, not least as subject matter for discussion on that final night's banquet. The tournaments are held traditionally in the third week of July each year, with the venues generally being rotated unless one club happens to have an anniversary to be marked. The contests of the following table are as near as the messieurs Ingelse and Morild dare commit themselves, without risking becoming subjected to possible criticism at the next of the series, to be held at York in July, 1992. The gaps in the Tournament Winner' column on the far right must therefore simply remain - although it was agreed by the leaders of The Forty Club and S.G.S.C.C. at Slagelse in 1991, unofficially, that Dansk XL C.C. be declared the winner 'because of the superb manner in which the tournament had been organized'. This may convey far more than any results.

Winners of Matches

Year	Venue	S.G.S.-Dansk	Forty-S.G.S.	Dansk-Forty	Tournament Winner
1969	Wassenaar	Dansk XL	S.G.S.	Forty	-
1971	Hastings	Draw	Draw	Forty	-
1972	Amstelveen	Dansk XL	<i>Rain</i>	Forty	-
1973	Copenhagen	S.G.S.	Forty	Forty	Forty Club
1974	Birmingham	Draw	Draw	Forty	-
1975	Deventer	S.G.S.	Forty	Forty	Forty Club
1976	Odense	Dansk XL	Draw	Forty	-
1978	Oxford	Dansk XL	Forty	Forty	Forty Club
1979	Eindhoven	Dansk XL	Forth	Draw	-
1980	Edinburgh	Draw	Draw	Dansk XL	-
1981	Skanderborg	S.G.S.	Not played	Not played	No contest!
1982	Cambridge	S.G.S.	Forty	Forty	Forty Club
1983	Amersfoort	Draw	Draw	Draw	-
1984	Copenhagen	Rain	Forty	Dansk XL	-
1986	Beckenham	S.G.S.	Forty	Forty	Forty Club
1987	Bloemendaal	Dansk XL	Rain	Forty	-
1988	Herning	S.G.S.	S.G.S.	Forty	S.G.S. CC
1989	Beckenham	S.G.S.	Forty	Forty	Forty Club
1990	Amstelveen	S.G.S.	S.G.S.	Forty	S.G.S. CC
1991	Slagelse	Dansk XL	S.G.S.	Rain	Dansk XL (unofficially)

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